



Chairman's Report 2021

It was John Lennon who famously said "*Everything will be okay in the end. If it's not okay, it's not the end*". This resonates with the opinion of some medics who believe that Covid will cease to be a Pandemic and will become Endemic! This suggests that "things" may never be okay and we may never see the end. I hope the medics are wrong and that at some stage we get back to normal, whatever that is.

Against this background *The Village News* has reported that local businesses had a good season thanks largely to domestic tourists who also stayed longer than overseas tourists usually do. Restaurants, wine estates, and the adventure markets were the main beneficiaries.

In these abnormal times we have had to adapt to new ways of doing things. Most of our EXCO meetings have been held virtually and communication is mostly via email and WhatsApp. A number of the forums the HRA has been part of have either ceased to operate or have been postponed indefinitely. This is a sad state of affairs.

Significantly the most important forum we participate in, the WARD 3 committee, has continued to function so there is some important stuff to report back on.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

These were held in October 2021 which resulted in Ward Committee elections being held in November. The HRA was re-elected for a further 5 year term, having secured a significant percentage of the votes cast. Thank you for the support and for the confirmation that you value the work done on this forum. We will continue to report back to you on a quarterly basis on the issues dealt with and decisions made. Please be encouraged to raise issues which you feel are important with the EXCO so that we can get them onto the Ward 3 agenda.

FERNKLOOF NATURE RESERVE

The management plan for FNR is still not in place. Cape Nature has refused to sign off the PAMP and has referred it back to the municipality and the interested parties to resolve their differences. This is really unfortunate and it detracts from the urgent need for sustainable and affordable management of one of our region's most valued assets. Executive Mayor Annelie Rabie has stated publicly that the Environment and its preservation will be the cornerstone of the new council's strategy in the Overstrand. We look forward to an intervention that can bring parties together and agree on a plan.

A further issue of concern is the drawn out process of negotiation regarding the tenure of the Hermanus Botanical Society at Fernkloof. It is incomprehensible that this issue is still unresolved.

THE BYPASS

In her inaugural address new Executive Mayor Dr Annelie Rabie told us that there will be NO BYPASS. Meetings have been held with the new MEC for Transport Daylyn Mitchell and Premier Alan Winde and the sentiments of the public of Hermanus, backed by the Council resolution, have been conveyed loud and clear. Our understanding is that the financial provision made for the Bypass by the provincial government has been re-allocated elsewhere and that the EIA, with a closing date of 31 December 2021, would be rendered null and void, and that the Bypass would die with it. We await confirmation of this. You will see in the Financial Statements that a considerable sum was spent on legal fees in opposing the Bypass and we trust that it will prove to have been money well spent.

GROTTO EAST PICNIC AREA

The remedial work to stabilise the seaward face of the berm at the picnic site, which was promised to commence in July 2021, has not begun and the latest date we have been given is February 2022. The reasons are related to supply chain regulations having to be complied with. This is a case of the “CLEAN AUDIT” taking precedence over service delivery. While we don't want to foster a culture of bashing the municipality the very long delays on this project are disappointing.

BABOONS

As mentioned in the half-yearly report we have deferred to the Baboon Action Group on issues relating to baboons. They are present on Facebook and publish regular comprehensive reports which make interesting reading. If you wish to be kept informed please sign up for their newsletter.

SOCIAL COHESION

The last year has been quiet insofar as any reported social unrest is concerned and we are grateful for this. There has been quite a lot of activity in relation to the planned Schulphoek Housing project. Two teams of people, drawn from civil society organisations, have been working on the conceptual design as well as the technical design of the project and significant progress has been made. In 2022 a Social Compact will be developed and a census of those living in the area will be undertaken to determine who qualifies for housing and in what form. Although Schulphoek is outside of the area of operation of the HRA we feel that any effort to sustain peaceful co-existence in greater Hermanus is in our members' best interest.

CBD REGENERATION

The High Street component of the CBD regeneration project was completed in the middle of the year and despite the delays it has been welcomed by all who live, work and shop there. Visitors and locals alike have commented on the ambience which has been created and business owners within the precinct are delighted with the development. The municipality has agreed to the closure of a section of the street at peak weekend and holiday times and this is welcomed. The HRA was closely involved in the High Street design phase and kept up pressure on the municipality to complete the project whilst maintaining acceptable standards of finish. Next on the list is the Taxi Rank area adjacent to the circle at Main and Royal Roads, which is in dire need of improvement and beautification.

MEMBERSHIP

With the passage of time there has been a decline in the number of members of the HRA who have renewed their subscriptions. As the Chairman of the organisation I and the EXCO are concerned about this. I believe that there are a number of factors which are at the heart of the matter. Based on the feedback from email communications there are people who have left Hermanus, some are deceased and some are too busy or are simply no longer interested. There is a clear understanding that the demographics of the membership tends to be older people who have been members for a number of years. We also understand that in the long term the continued existence of the HRA depends on recruiting new younger members, particularly onto the EXCO. In the coming year we will be focussing on recruitment and on closer engagement with the community in order to give them an understanding of the benefits of membership. Please encourage friends and family to join.

THE EXCO

In the three and a half years that I have been Chairman I have had the privilege of working with a number of talented and deeply committed people who have given support and encouragement when it was needed and also honest feedback when it was appropriate. Our EXCO consists of six members at present, one of whom will not stand for re-election. The remaining members have busy lives with both business and personal commitments. When “things” return to normal we are going to need more hands on deck in order to engage with the range of organisations which we have traditionally been members of in order to represent the interests of our members. We need someone with a legal background, an environmentalist, a Safety and Security rep, a Planning and Infrastructure rep and we need a Secretary. My perspective as a relatively new member of the HRA is that I have gained hugely from my membership. I have made many new friends, gained an understanding of the town’s dynamics, become more environmentally aware and have a newfound understanding of the legislative framework within which the municipality operates. I invite you to consider giving up a few hours a week taking on one of the portfolios and making a contribution to the running of the HRA. Our aim is to make Hermanus a nicer, cleaner and safer place in which to live and work and play.

While on the topic of the EXCO it would be remiss of me not to mention Jan Cilliers. As the then chairman of the Westcliff Residents Association Jan was co-opted onto the EXCO of the HRA by Bob Stanway. During his tenure Jan has given sterling service to the HRA in the Infrastructure and Planning capacity. Jan’s encyclopaedic knowledge of the town, its history and all things pertaining to property and planning legislation have been a huge asset to the HRA. Jan’s dry humour, which is always laced with a healthy dose of jovial cynicism, will be sorely missed and we wish him health and happiness in his second “retirement”.

FINANCE

Despite lower income and higher expenditure than in 2020 our financial position is quite strong with cash reserves of R 147,544. The decrease in income is in line with a lower number of subscription renewals. This was perhaps as a result of lockdown during the pandemic and we will know for certain once 2022 subscription statistics are in. What is certain is that we need to sustain the membership numbers if we are to continue to be viable financially. Having said that we must remember that we are not a commercial enterprise but a community based civil society organisation whose purpose is to represent the interests of our membership in our engagement with the municipality and other spheres of local government. It is therefore the rate of renewal of subscriptions rather than the Rand amount which is a more important indicator of relevance. I can hear the accountants groaning but it’s

the truth. You will have received the Invoice for subscriptions for 2022 at a reduced rate of R100. We thank you in anticipation for your renewal.

The Annual Financial Statements are attached for your information and comment.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our constitution requires us to conduct the AGM within 3 months of the year end and it will be held in February 2022. Considering the current Covid restrictions as well as the fact that many of us are senior citizens or are not permanently resident in hermanus we have decided to hold the AGM virtually. This has a number of benefits. Firstly there are no restrictions on the number of attendees as there would be in a physical venue. Secondly there is no risk of infecting one another. Thirdly there is no cost of hiring a venue.

The date and time of the AGM will be published in the local press as well as via email.

I look forward to seeing you at the AGM.

Brian Wridgway

Chairman